



CANADA
4-H Saskatchewan

Exploring 4-H at Home



Science and
Technology

Pillar: Science & Technology

Project: Car Care

Activity: Auto Detailing
(How to clean your car)



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Car Care

Activity Guide

Cleaning the Outside of the Car

There are many different ways and products to use to clean your car. If you talked to 3 different professionals they would all tell you slightly different things and recommend different products. Here are the basic steps you can use to make sure your (or your parent's) car is clean and sparkling.

Materials you will need:

1. 2 buckets (at least)
2. Microfiber towels
3. Wash mitts
4. Scrub brush
5. Cleaning supplies of your choice
 - a. *There are many options for cleaning supplies. Some are available through online retailers while others can be purchased through automotive retail locations. If you are unsure, talk to the staff at the store for recommendations.*

Washing Steps:

1. Set Up
Make sure you have all of your materials and cleaning supplies ready to go before you get started. You don't want to let the water dry on the car while searching for things you may have forgotten.
2. Prewash
Using a hose or a pressure washer, rinse down your entire vehicle. This is important because it will begin to loosen the dirt and make cleaning your car easier and cause less damage to the surface of the vehicle.

3. Wheels and Tires

It is important to wash your wheels and tires before the main part of your car because they are usually the dirtiest and will spray mud and dirt up while cleaning. Also, use a separate bucket for wheels as you will for the body of the car.

- Spray your cleaning solution onto your tires and rinse off
- Using a circular motion and a sponge, clean the rest of the tighter surfaces
- Use a scrub brush for the inside of necessary
- Rinse again

4. Wash (using the two bucket system)

Make sure you are using a proper car shampoo not dish soap. These chemicals are very harsh on your vehicle's finish. Using two buckets is very helpful and recommended.

- Fill a bucket 2/3 full with cool water. Add the recommended amount of shampoo to the water. Using a strong jet of water, fill the remainder of the bucket for suds. Fill the second bucket with clean, cool, water for rinsing your wash mitt.
- Soak a large wash mitt in the soapy water and wring it out over the wash surface. This acts like a pre-soak, adding further moisture and helps loosen gunk on the surface.
- Begin washing the car. Working in sections, start at the top of the car and work your way down, regularly cleaning your mitt in the rinse bucket.
- Wash in straight, overlapping lines instead of circles and remember to be gentle with the wash mitt on the first pass. This first pass will pick up the majority of the dirt and loosens the remaining dirt for pick up on the second pass.



- If the water in the bucket begins to get cloudy or gritty, throw it out and refill with clean water. More often is better than less often.
- After one section is washed, rinse it with the hose before moving on. You don't want the soap to dry on the paint and stain it.

When rinsing sections, use the same top to bottom process. As you progress from one section to the next, it's important that you use the hose to keep the entire car wet. This will prevent water droplets from drying on the paint and leaving water spots. You want to be able to dry the car with towels before it air dries.

5. Drying

Don't air dry or be tempted to drive down the highway in an attempt to dry the car.

- Once you have rinsed your motor, it's equally important to properly dry it. You're looking to avoid watermarks created by leaving the car to air dry and to make blemishes easier to spot before claying or polishing. You may need to use several microfiber towels while drying your vehicle.
- Wipe down all surfaces that you've washed, in order to prevent rust from building up. Make sure not to leave any water standing on your vehicle once it's dried.

6. Waxing

After you've washed your car, you can help protect the paint finish by applying a good wax.

Waxes are relatively inexpensive and are an easy way to add some extra shine to your car, but unfortunately, only last for a few weeks. Most waxes show a significant decline in protection after about 5 weeks.

Many waxing products have different directions that work best for their product so follow the manufacturer specified directions.

Additional Tips

1. Wash your vehicle when it is cool, not right after driving it
2. Wash your vehicle out of the heat and direct sunlight. This will help slow the drying process and make water spots less likely.
3. Use lots of clothes to limit the amount of scratches you could be adding to your vehicle

Cleaning the Inside of the Car

There are many different ways and products to use to clean the inside of your car too. If you talked to those same 3 different professionals they would all tell you slightly different things and recommend different products. Here are the basic steps you can use to make sure your (or your parent's) car is clean and sparkling.

Materials you may need:

1. Vacuum
2. Glass cleaner
3. Vinyl, plastic, leather, upholstery cleaner (depending on the materials in your car)
4. Microfiber towels

Washing Steps:

1. Pick up, remove all the trash.
2. Vacuum. This is where all those attachments on your vacuum cleaner come in handy. Cars have tight nooks and crannies that are natural trash collectors. If you cannot reach those spaces use a can of compressed air and start with those spaces first as you will be



blowing the dirt into the rest of the car. Do not forget the seams of your car seats, armrests and door handles, floor mats (pull them out), center console (if applicable), cup holders and your dashboard. A clean, dry paint brush is useful to clean the vents.

3. Clean and condition the hard surfaces including the dash, glove compartment, other storage spots, doors, seatbelts and sideboards. A good all-purpose house cleaner does a great job. Spray it on a rag, and then wipe the surfaces. Try an old soft-bristled toothbrush for hard to reach spots. If you want to use a conditioner on vinyl surfaces, use the non-glossy type.
4. Clean upholstery. For cloth use spray upholstery cleaner. If your seats are leather use a leather soap and conditioner. All-purpose cleaner will work on vinyl seats. Beware that conditioning products with silicone can stain your clothes.
5. Carpets. A steam cleaner is perfect for thoroughly cleaning car carpets. If you do not have a steam cleaner, use a good carpet cleaner. Use this on your floor mats as well. Avoid over-wetting and let all carpets thoroughly dry out to prevent mold.
6. Clean all the interior windows. For streak-free results avoid the sun, spray window cleaner on a rag or paper towel, rub to clean. Note: avoid window cleaners with ammonia if you have tinted windows as it can cause blotching on your windows.
7. For a professional finish, re-vacuum the car. All this cleaning will stir up more dirt.
8. Finally add an air freshener of your choice. You can choose a traditional one or make your own natural ones from essential oils.

Sources:
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<https://www.pellmansauto.com/7-steps-beautiful-car-interior/>